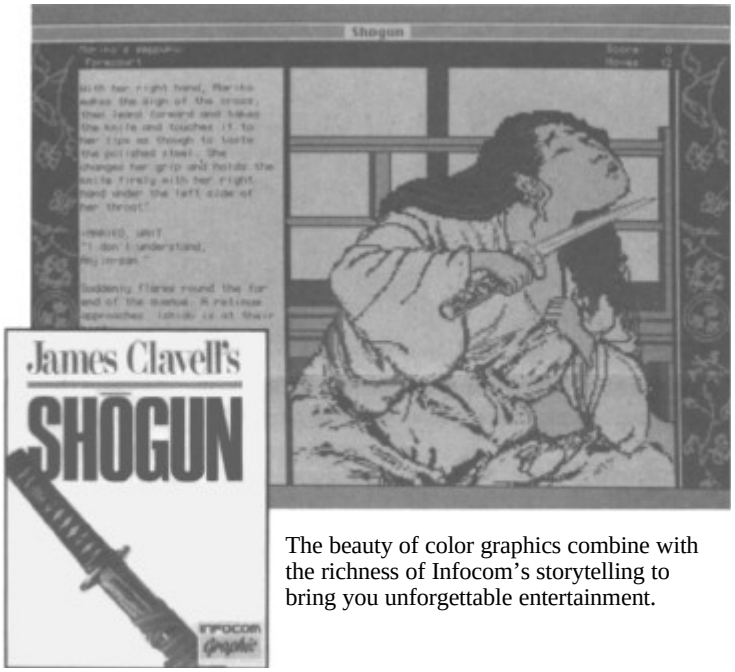
The Status Line

Volume VIII Number 1 | Formerly The New Zork Times | Spring 1989

James Clavell's Shogun comes alive



The beauty of color graphics combine with the richness of Infocom's storytelling to bring you unforgettable entertainment.

First, there's the sick, mutinous crew to deal with. Then there's your own exhaustion and illness. Plus the stormy sea and the treacherous reef to navigate. But all that pales in comparison to the challenge of surviving your abrupt entrance into a culture totally foreign to you. Your training has prepared you for everything... everything but this.

Dave Lebling has taken the adventure, intrigue, and excitement of James Clavell's classic novel, *Shogun,* one step further in a masterful new work of interactive fiction. The seven million *Shogun* fans who enjoyed James Clavell's book and the tens of millions who watched its television adaptation can now explore the world of feudal Japan, with its labyrinthine palaces, rank jails, serene teahouses, and equally fascinating and complicated inhabitants.

The adventure begins on the *Erasmus,* the only ship of five to survive a dangerous journey through uncharted seas. At last on the unknown shores of The Japans, you face a barbarian's welcome of torture and imprisonment. To keep your life, you must identify who can hurt you and who can help you. At first, you know very little about the world in which you find yourself. Exploring, asking, learning, testing are all crucial to your survival. Death is always the merest whisper away.

In James Clavell's *Shogun,* you will meet Toranaga and Ishido, vicious enemies who take the lives of thousands of men in their struggle for the coveted title of Shogun. You also meet and fall in love with Mariko, your translator and initiator into undreamt-of mysteries.

The key to success in the interactive *Shogun* is the ability to act as the British pilot-major Black

Continued on page 3

Journey: Enter a new realm of storytelling

A great evil has fallen over the land. Your town, suffering from five years of blighted crops, sickness and contaminated water, begins to lose all hope. It is then that a small group sets forth in search of help...

These words send you on your Journey. Subtitled *The Quest Begins,* this classic narrative, in the exciting tradition of J.R.R. Tolkein, plunges you into an uncharted world of dwarves, elves, nymphs and wizards.

Journey—the first in our new Role-Play Chronicles series—takes you through a world ruled by magic and inhabited by mythical creatures you may befriend or battle. And, because you control the actions of the party, you must be physician, magician, combat strategist, and character judge while pursuing the defeat of the evil which has infested the land.

The party sets out from your home town of Lendros. You leave your town for the very first time and are astonished by the legendary wonders you encounter in your adventure. Your quest leads over mountains, through underground caves, across the plains and over the sea. Clashes with the forces of evil are fought with unexpected allies, and you must decide who are friends and who are messengers of the Dread Lord.

Journey breaks into an exciting new genre of computer games that draws from the best features of

Continued on page 2

Introducing Arthur: The Quest for Excalibur

Imagine sitting in your London flat, sharing a Sunday meal with your family, when... poof! ... you turn yourself into an eel. Your Aunt Rose faints dead away into her mashed potatoes as your mischievous little brother runs to capture you in a mayonnaise jar for hideous biological experiments. Although it seems like little more than a neat party trick, you'll take this special power seriously in *Arthur: The Quest for Excalibur.*

Infocom's newest Graphic Interactive Fiction story casts you as the youthful Arthur on a quest for the legendary sword in the stone that will make you King of England. You meet up with Merlin, the most famed of magicians, who give you insight into both the world of nature and the nature of man. But equally as precious a gift is the power to turn yourself into several different animals. This allows you, as eel or owl or salamander, to get into places and perform heroic deeds impossible for a mere human.

The legend of young Arthur comes alive as never before through the graces of Infocom's

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The Status Line

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The first Role-Play Chronicle

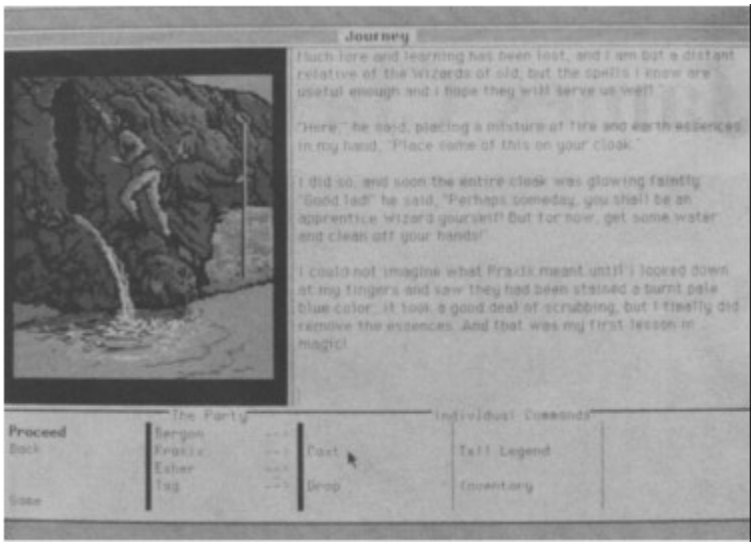
Continued from page 1

interactive fiction, role playing games and traditional fiction to create a game with rich prose challenging puzzles, and a diverse group of characters. Over 100 beautifully rendered graphic images add tone and depth to the tale.

Journey departs from other games in its format as well. You interact with the story through menus which provide individual and group options. That means you spend more time enjoying the story and less time trying to figure out where you can go and what you can (or can't) do. With the new menu interface you don't need to be a typist to play. Simply hit the first letter of the option you desire or use the arrow keys, and *voilá,* you're on your way. Or, should you prefer, you can just use a mouse or a joystick. This simplicity lets you get into the story quickly. If you're a seasoned player, you'll love how fast you can make progress on your trek.

Journey, itself a new exploration in the field of computer storytelling, was written by Marc Blank, a pioneer in the creation of interactive fiction. Marc co-authored the original mainframe version of *Zork* and the personal computer versions of *Zork I, II,* and *III,* and *Enchanter.* Also to his credit are *Deadline,* the first interactive mystery, and *Border Zone,* Infocom's first story of intrigue.

Journey is now available on the Macintosh and Amiga, and is scheduled for release on the Apple II, IBM and 100% Compatibles in May. All versions of *Journey* will retail for $49.95.



Journey combines the challenge of interactive fiction, the adventure of role-playing, and the enchantment of an epic chronicle.

PARSER ?? *by Stu Galley*

What is a parser anyway, and why should it matter to you? Almost any dictionary can answer the first question, and I'm here to tell you about the second one.

As the dictionary states, a parser is something that takes apart a sentence, word by word, and determines what the words mean, and then what the sentence means. If you ever diagrammed a sentence for an English class, then you were parsing. But it's a lot easier for *you* to parse English than it is for a machine, because you've had a lot more practice at it, and you started life with a certain natural ability to do it.

At Infocom, I've been working on a program that will parse your commands and pass on their "meaning" to an interactive story. This program is a part of *Zork Zero, Arthur, and Shogun*, as well as future Infocom products that may want to understand more complex sentences. In a way, I'm like the recording engineer for your favorite rock album, because my job is to make sure that the artists' talent comes through to you as clearly as possible. If the guitarist wants more reverb... I mean if the implementor wants adverbs to work in his story, then I provide it. The better I do my job, the less you notice it!

Almost anyone can write a simple parsing program, just as almost anyone can make simple recordings on their boom box. A simple parser could parse any two-word sentence, by calling the first word a verb and the second one a noun. If it didn't know the verb, or if the noun wasn't the name of something in the room, then it would give up. Some simple adventure games work exactly that way.

Until now, Infocom's thirty-odd interactive stories have all used the parser that evolved from *Zork I.* But each new story needed some new features in the parser, and so it grew more clever, but also harder to fix and improve. Eventually we decided to build a new parser from scratch, using the theory of computational linguistics. (Technically speaking, we used an ATN algorithm with a LALR grammar and one-token look-ahead.)

So what does this mean to you? It means that you can converse with our interactive fiction more simply than ever, and we can easily add features that you've never seen before. For example, *Zork Zero* notices if you seem to be having trouble with the parser, and it offers helpful suggestions, such as sample commands. And in *Shogun,* you can use a wider range of sentences, including statements and questions, to converse with the characters you'll meet. In the future, we may develop new kinds of products, able to "talk" with you about many topics; our interactive fiction could become much more than mazes and mysteries!

Arthur: it'll bring out the animal in you

Continued from page 1

newest-generation parser (see page 2). Communicating with the story is now easier than ever, and mercifully, we decided not to require you to use Olde English. Nearly 100 pictures enhance your adventure with vivid scenes of medieval England. For the less aesthetically inclined, the graphics may be set aside in favor of on-screen mapping, your inventory, or your score.

The Quest for Excalibur is a three-day crusade with a finite number of moves, so don't waste them trying to cultivate a meaningful relationship with the kraken you hook up with in the lake. And not even a future king gets something for nothing, so be prepared to offer gold or good deeds as needed to move along in your quest. You'll need to keep your eyes and ears open to find the treasures for your trades and the tools for your good deeds. And you can hone your wits with the riddles sprinkled throughout the game.

Arthur adds an exciting new dimension to the timeless Arthurian tale while preserving all of its original richness and grandeur.

Arthur lived in the Age of Chivalry, a time when virtue was recognized and rewarded. Your accomplishments will also be rewarded, earning you points for Chivalry, Experience, Quest, and Wisdom. All are needed as proof that you have what it takes to be a righteous king.

You'll meet many intriguing characters, some nice, some needy, and some downright nefarious. Included from the classic Arthurian legend are the evil King Lot, your archrival for the throne, and the mysterious Lady of the Lake. You'll encounter a spectrum of knights—blue, black, red, and colorless (but not dull)— whose zeal for their knightly activities saddles you with roadblocks. There's a peculiar dragon, a spicy leprechaun, and even a drooling village idiot. But especially beware the evil demon Nudd, whose powers rival those of Merlin.

Arthur offers all the features you've asked for in adventure stories. Merlin's crystal ball lets you take advantage of on-screen hints. The Undo command makes it possible to rescind even the most foolhardy of decisions. And the mouse option offers you flexibility you've never had before.

Arthur is Infocom's second collaboration with game designer Bob Bates, eloquent author of *Sherlock: The Riddle of the Crown Jewels.* Fans of fantasy artwork will immediately recognize Greg Hildebrandt's exquisite style in the package cover illustration. Within, you'll find an illuminated Book of Hours.

Arthur: The Quest for Excalibur will be available in June 1989 for the Macintosh, Apple II series, IBM, and Amiga computers. Retail price is $49.95 for the Apple II version, and $59.95 for all others

Clavell's Shogun

Continued from page 1

thorne would. Handsome, cagey and self-assured, his confidence is matched only by his talent to navigate a ship through the trickiest of waters. To survive and succeed in this new world requires thorough observation, quick thought, and careful action. Lebling's puzzles should be attacked in Blackthorne's character, and they rely on Blackthorne's personal knowledge to be solved.

James Clavell's *Shogun* ushers in a new era of interactive text adventures. Immersing you in the world of the game, *Shogun* sets the scene with richly detailed graphics drawn in the style of 16th-century Japanese court paintings. It is one of the first games to use our newest parser (see page 2), which makes communicating with the game even easier. Written in the novel's rich, descriptive prose, the game is as engaging as James Clavell's original. James Clavell himself feels the tone of his work has been so well captured, that he claims Dave Lebling is "the person who knows the most about *Shogun* in the entire world."

Infocom's *Shogun* is the perfect marriage of the talents of two extremely prolific and popular authors. James Clavell's other novels include *Tai Pan, King Rat, Noble House* and *Whirlwind.* Dave Lebling is the author or co-author of nine works of interactive fiction, including *Zork I, II,* and *III, Enchanter, Suspect* and, most recently, *The Lurking Horror.*

Shogun is now available for the Macintosh, Amiga and Apple II series. A version for IBM and 100% compatibles will be available in May. Apple II version retails for $49.95; all other versions retail for $59.95.

Winners of InfoGrammy Awards

A plethora of Infocomposers wrote Debbie Gibson's Army in response to the Infocom Songwriting Contest. While this was highly flattering and entertaining, it left us at a loss to choose the single, most perfect company ditty. Therefore, our only course of action was to select THE BEST in appropriate categories. We do thank all of the entrants for their submissions, and we recognize the effort—and sometimes talent—evident in all of them.

Here, then, are the six winning entries, which we've taken the liberty of titling or retitling as deemed suitable. Each winner will receive an audio cassette taped with all the winning songs and an Infocom game of choice.

The Best Infocommercial

Jamie Amos, Culver City, CA, won hands down in this category with *Infocom, You Put the* "If" *Back in Life,* a slick, lively marketeer's dream.

The Best Infocom Anthem

Doug Benson, Dallas, TX, was chosen as the recipient of the coveted Infocom Game Testers' Choice Award for *My Heart Belongs to Infocom,* a wry, dark march.

The Best Inforap

Mina and Beth Atanacio, Buffalo, NY, charmed us with *Lots of Games in Hundreds of Piles,* an innocent, postnasal-dripping performance with winning lyrics.

The Best Inforock

Nick Ruth, Ellicott, MD, wants us to *Cross the Line* in his rockin' plea for an Infocom world and a top 40 single.

The Best Infolk Song

H. Goodman, New York, NY, strummed *The Grues Have Taken Over* for us, a gruevy tune with clever lyrics.

The Best Adaptation of a George Michael Song

Bob Roeh, Victoria, TX, whose offering was *Game,* was "faith"ful to the diet soda hawker's sexy style.

Helpful Hints from Customer Support

So, you've gotten all kinds of neat new Infocom games, but now realize that they're no longer just interactive fiction. Here are a few clues to help you out with our new brand of entertainment software. If you have any other technical questions, *not hint requests,* or need to upgrade your disk for any reason, please send all correspondence to: Infocom, 125 CambridgePark Drive, Cambridge, MA 02140, Attn: Customer Support.

BattleTech

- In the first of our series of *BattleTech* releases, you can only have three mechs and four other people in your party.

- When you get to the map room, don't despair. Touch the seven planets that are listed in the dark green shaded area on page 14 of your manual. You'll be surprised as to what happens next.

- When you get to the Inventor's Hut, you don't exactly feel welcome? Simple solution: make sure you have a tech and a medic in your party and that they are both trained to excellent level. Bring them to the Inventor's Hut with you, and the red carpet will be rolled out.

- If you're playing *BattleTech* on a Tandy 1000 with 384K of memory, you *must* use DOS 2.11. Any other DOS will take up too much memory and crash *BattleTech.* Remember, you can always add more memory. Then you won't have to worry about which DOS you're using!

Quarterstaff

- It's unanimous — no one knows what the heck to do with the coin and parchment. So we'll tell you:

On the lower portion of the parchment, there are four cryptic messages surrounding a compass rose. These four messages are instructions for deciphering four different "magic words." Each magic word, when used in conjunction with the magic Identify Wand (the one depicted on the upper portion of the parchment), will reveal the nature of potions, scrolls, keys, or other wands.

1. The first step in deciphering a magic word is to place the coin on the compass with the coin's arrow pointing in the prescribed direction. For instance, the cryptic message on the lower left corner of the parchment begins with "Peering South." You would then place the coin on the compass rose with the coin's arrow pointing South.

2. Next the message says, "let your mind's eye *opposite journey*." Therefore, you begin deciphering at the North point, keeping the coin fixed in place, pointing South.

3. The message next specifies "*four* steps to the *East."* This means you'll be obtaining a four letter word. Each "step" (or in some cases, "pace") equals one letter in the word.

4. Proceeding around the compass from North to East, the first letter would then be "G." The G is on the parchment. When deciphering the other magic words, the 1st letter may appear on the coin. However, in all cases, each "step" will alternate between the parchment and the coin. So, if the first letter is on the coin, the second letter will be on the parchment and so on.

5. Moving from the compass to the coin in our example, the next letter would be U.

6. Then, moving back out to the compass, the third letter is R.

7. Finally, the fourth letter, going back to the coin, is Z. You then end up with GURZ.

8. Now you can identify the nature of an old key and let "no Lock be your barrier." Simply hold the Identify Wand and type GURZ OLD KEY.

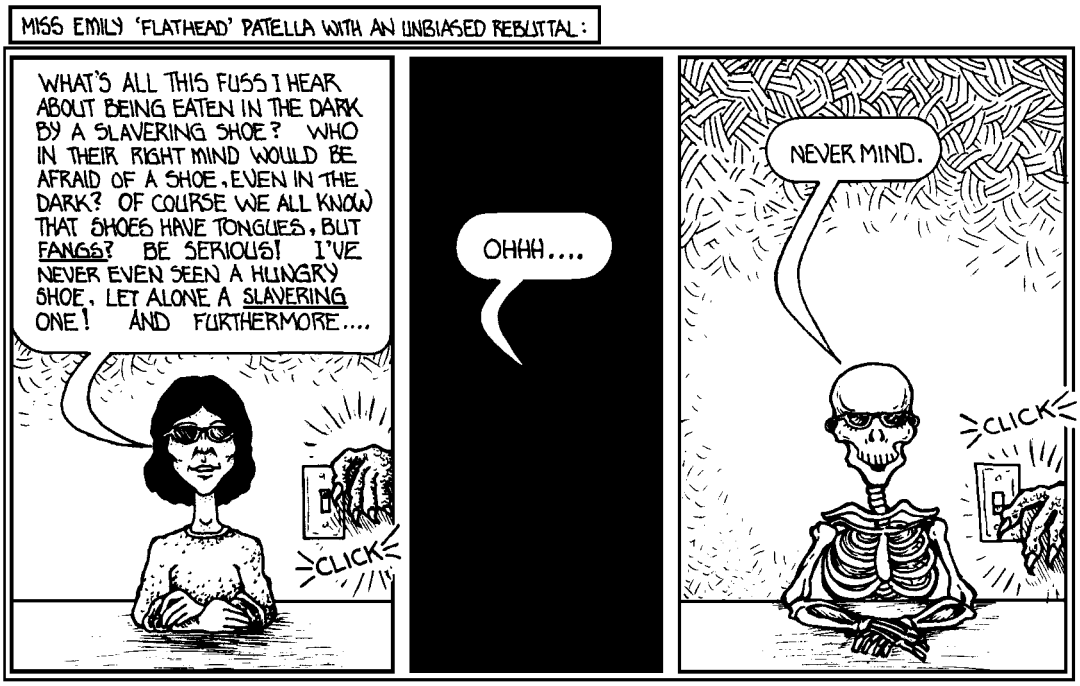
9. If you're still having trouble, write to Customer Support at Infocom for directions enhanced with graphic illustrations.

You've tried to burn some thing and your machine crashed, right? Or you walked into a particular location and your Mac froze up for an eternity? You've had the privilege of encountering the dreaded BURN bug in *Quarterstaff.* To avoid the crash, *never* burn anything that has a sub-menu (for instance, any creature carrying an item or any item that acts as a container). Stick to burning torches and doors. When you get to the Charred Room, don't linger there. The room is so hot it will set your party on fire and, eventually, crash your machine. So, go through in just one turn. (The only item in the room is a BRONZE SEAL. Once you get the BRONZE SEAL KEY, send one party member back to unlock it. That will eliminate problems there.) Finally, on the second level of the dungeon, the region with areas Al through AS, etc., contains land mines which will also set your party on fire. If you stick to the D's and the 5's, you'll avoid the mines and the crashes.

Did you start to load the game only to have it inform you that your System and Finder are too old? You need to use System 6.0 or higher and Finder 6.1 or higher. The game comes equipped with the necessary versions. Simply boot up off the *Quarterstaff* System Disk and you'll have it made. You might find that you have the most recent System on your disk and it still has problems. In this case, you're running out of memory. Again, boot your machine from the System we've supplied.

Solid Gold *Planetfall* for the Commodore 64/128

If you have the Solid Gold version of Planetfall for the Commodore 64/128 and it keeps asking you to turn the disk over to side 2, don't panic. Our disk manufacturer copied side 1 onto both sides of the disk by mistake. You can send your disk only to Infocom Customer support along with a letter explaining the problem, and we'll send you back a corrected disk with our apologies.



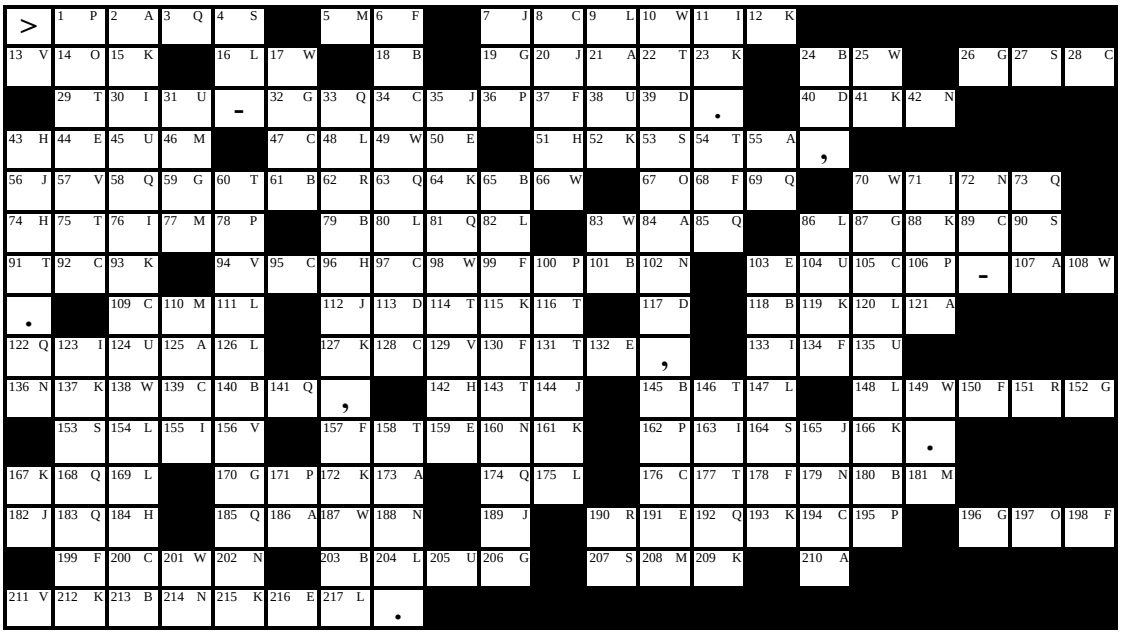
Miss Emily 'Flathead' Patella with an unbiased rebuttal Brad Schenck

PUZZLE #20

We call this puzzle an InfoCrostic. If you have never done a puzzle of this type before, here's how it works:

First, go through the list of clues, from A through W, filling in as many as you can. Then, use the numbers below the blanks to fill the letters you've gotten into the like numbered boxes in the diagram. (The letters in the boxes in the diagram tell you which clue that letter comes I from.) You can now work back and forth I between the diagram and the clues until you have finished both.

When you're done, the diagram will be an excerpt from an Infocom game. The first letter of each clue, reading down from A through W, will spell out the author's name and the source.



A. Scolding from Grammy (3 words)
173 55 210 21 186 125 84 121 2 107

B. A holiday
145 79 18 118 140 61 180 24 101 213 65 203

C. Alec Guinness line (4 words)
200 109 47 176 89 97 95 8 28 139 194 128
92 105 34

D. Sports figure Arthur
117 39 40 113

E. Talks on and on
44 191 103 159 216 132 50

F. Breakfast drink (2 words)
99 178 150 134 6 198 199 130 37 157 68

G. Cover-up
196 26 87 32 206 19 170 152 59

H. A loud laugh
43 184 51 96 142 74

I. Turn on
71 11 133 30 76 123 155 163

J. "Now I ____ ___ ____…," (3 words)
165 189 182 7 56 144 20 112 35

K. A common Zork I input (4 words)
137 64 88 212 93 172 193 15 127 115 12 166
167 52 119 161 215 41 209 23

L. Great Lakes city (2 words)
169 82 16 217 148 111 9 126 175 48 86 120
80 147 154 204

M. Rodeo cry
46 208 77 181 5 110

N. There are many in Zork I
202 72 102 160 136 179 42 188 214

O. V.P. monogram
197 14 67

P. Mischievous vapors
106 1 78 195 100 36 171 162

Q. Zork II location (2 words)
33 81 63 174 122 85 141 185 3 69 73 192
168 183 58

R. Mischievous child
62 190 151

S. _____ _____ force, a fundamental interaction (2 words)
90 207 27 153 164 53 4

T. West Indies capital
143 22 54 131 60 158 91 146 177 75
29 114 116

U. Possible time to buy gas during a shortage (3 words)
45 205 38 135 31 104 124

V. Motto of a midwestern state (2 words)
13 156 129 211 57 94

W. Little girl ingredients
201 149 66 138 187 83 25 70 17 108
10 98 49

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

T-shirt size (5, M, L, XL): _____

RULES:

1. All entries must be postmarked by July 1, 1989. (Entries from outside the U.S. and Canada are due Sept. 1, 1989.) **2.** Entries must be on this form, or a photocopy of this form. **3.** Limit of one entry per person. **4.** All entries must be mailed separately. **5.** Up to 25 prizes will be awarded. If more than 25 correct entries are received, a drawing will determine the winners. **6.** Void where prohibited.

PRIZE:

The New Zork Times Puzzle Winner T-Shirt

MAIL TO:

Infocom, Inc.
Puzzle #20
125 CambridgePark Drive
Cambridge, MA 02140

Holmes! Charles S. Hayes

Good-Bye to the Status Line, Hello to ZQ

Here it is — the 21st edition of *The Status Line.* Well, of course, most of those editions were called *The New Zork Times* until a "major metropolitan newspaper marshalled their cadre of lawsuit-thirsty lawyers.

After 21 newsletters we think we have somewhat perfected the medium. Our combination of news features, nutty contests and puzzles has been praised by many, including our competitors. So as we are reshaping the world of interactive fiction and other forms of storytelling, it is time for us to push back the publishing envelope once again. We have decided to retire *TSL* and replace it with a full color magazine called ***ZQ.***

Don't Panic. We will still be the same publication we have always been, but now in color with more detail about storytelling in general. And don't worry about *TSL,* it is going to Florida to join the *NZT* at the retirement home for leading-edge publications

And just think, now you won't have to take black and white film on your vacation anymore for those Landmark Photos!

Here is a sample of what to expect in the first edition of ***ZQ:***

Steve Meretzky will entertain you with the first in a series of open-ended interactive stories. In each issue of ***ZQ,*** Steve will write a segment of a story that ends with a number of choices. Your vote will determine the direction of the plot.

We'll tell you about a variety of new storytelling products, including the latest releases from Infocom.

George Alec Effinger, acclaimed sci-fi author of *When Gravity Fails,* has written an original short story especially for this premier issue of ***ZQ.***

Plus puzzles, cartoons, contests, and much more!

Solution to Puzzle #18

In Puzzle #18, we asked you to use a series of clues, all based on *Beyond Zork,* to replace the letters in a mathematical equation with numbers, and then to solve the equation. The correct answer would be a positive integer.

Here are the intended answers to the clues: A.200 B. 103 C. 3 D. 41 E. 120 F. 811 G. 9 H.0 I. 3 J. 877 K. 30 L. 843 M. 2 Plugging these into the equation, we get:

$$\frac{\left(\frac{200}{100-3}+\frac{41 \times 120}{811+9}+0\right)^{3}}{\sqrt{877+30-843}}=64$$

However, there were two snags. Clue M was "The number of room names in *Beyond Zork* which contain the word EDGE." We meant 2— "Edge of Storms" and "Moor's Edge." However, many entrants pointed out that the location called "Ledge" contains the word EDGE, and therefore M should equal 3, and the final answer should equal 128. Since the clue was ambiguous enough to allow either interpretation, we have decided to allow both 64 and 128 as correct answers.

The other snag was caused by Clue H: "The number of locations in the Ethereal Plain of Atrii whose names do not begin with the letter O." In the game, all the rooms in the Plain of Atrii begin with "Above..." However, the *InvisiClues* map was incorrectly printed with all the names beginning "Over..." Unfortunately, your lazy Puzzle Editor used the InvisiClues map rather than the game in arriving at an intended answer of 0 for Clue H. If the actual number, 13, is used instead, the equation solves to the non-integers 1157.625 or 2315.25 (depending on one's interpretation of Clue M).

Apologies to everyone confused by this shoddily-constructed puzzle, and thanks to everyone who wrote to point out the errors. Recapping, we accepted the following answers: 64, 128, 1157.625, and 2315.25 (rounding was allowed in the last two cases). There were a total of 174 entries, of which 109 (63%) had one of the correct answers. (If you care: 74 people said 64,31 guessed 128, and four had one of the non-integer answers).

The drawing picked these 25 lucky winners: Christine Crocket, Hacienda Heights CA; Dave Hrencecin, University Park PA; Matt Roos, St. Louis MO; Mitchell Megaw, Spring Hill KS; Marcia Cutler, Greenwich CT; Michelle Perry, Sacramento CA; Craig Dohmen, Apollo PA; William Carnell, South Portland ME; Leroy Haugen, Belfair WA; Andrew Rezvani, Wyncote PA: Michael Brill, San Jose CA; Dan Spitzley, Gross Pointe Park MI; Jeffrey Shaw, North Attleboro MA; Rudy Montero, Miami FL; Robert Rhode, Davis CA; Eugene Foss, Flora IL; Julia White, Mebane NC; Jerry Wang, Cincinatti OH; Stephen Schneider, Amherst MA; William Randall, Barberton OH; James Kuivenen, Claremont CA; Jon-Paul Ward, Bronx NY; David Lee, Saskatoon SK, Canada; Jason Riedy, Tampa FL; and Angela Sandelius, Cadillac MI.

In the international competition for Puzzle #17 (answer: Leather Goddesses of Deimos) we had entries from, as usual, every corner of the world: Mexico. Germany, Thailand, and so on. There were 17 entries, of which 12 were correct. And the winner is: Kalman Tanito, of Finland!

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San Francisco, CA 94128

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NEW RELEASES!

JOURNEY™

You accompany a party of desperate villagers in their quest for the revered wisdom of the great wizard, Astrix. Only his wisdom can save their village. In the tradition of J.R.R. Tolkein's The Lord of the Rings, you'll share in the magical adventures of Tag, Bergon, Esher and Minar as you solve puzzles, overcome obstacles and explore unknown lands. Journey is the first software title in an exciting new category called "Role-Play Chronicles" created by Marc Blank. Role-Play Chronicles draw on the best features of interactive fiction, role-playing games and traditional fiction. (Mac requires 512K. Supports color on the Mac II. Apple II requires 128K.)

#JY-2132	Amiga	$49.95
#JY-1726	Apple II	$49.95
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